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SUBJECT: AFGHAN SOCIAL OUTREACH PROGRAM GAINS MOMENTUM AS  
DONORS DELIBERATE

REF: KABUL 498

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: SUPPORT FOR THE AFGHANISTAN SOCIAL OUTREACH PROGRAM (ASOP), UNVEILED BY THE INDEPENDENT DIRECTORATE FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE (IDLG) ON FEBRUARY 14 (REFTEL), IS GAINING MOMENTUM. IDLG ACKNOWLEDGES THE PROGRAM IS A WORK IN PROGRESS AND HAS WELCOMED COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. DONORS HAVE PROVIDED COMMENTS AND ARE COLLABORATING ON STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION IN 11 INITIAL PROVINCES (BADGHIS, FARAH, FARYAB, GHAZNI, HELMAND, LOGAR, KAPISA, WARDAK, KANDAHAR, URUZGAN, AND ZABUL). CITING SUCCESS IN THE PILOT PROJECT IN WARDAK, IDLG BELIEVES ASOP WILL FILL A CRITICAL GAP IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE UNTIL THE ELECTION OF DISTRICT COUNCILS. ASOP IS THE FIRST OF SEVERAL PROGRAMS FOR WHICH IDLG WILL REQUEST DONOR SUPPORT. POST IS WORKING TO QUICKLY PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAM IN THE SHORT-TERM AND THE DIRECTORATE IN THE LONG-TERM, WHILE ENCOURAGING OTHER DONORS TO DO THE SAME. END SUMMARY.

ASOP PROVIDES BRIDGE TO ELECTED DISTRICT COUNCILS  
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12. (SBU) THE IDLG'S AFGHANISTAN SOCIAL OUTREACH PROGRAM (ASOP) IS DESIGNED TO FILL A CRITICAL GAP IN SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNANCE UNTIL DISTRICT COUNCILS ARE ELECTED. THE PROGRAM WILL PUT IN PLACE APPOINTED DISTRICT SHURAS (COMMUNITY COUNCILS) TO PROVIDE COORDINATION AND OVERSIGHT OF SERVICE DELIVERY AS WELL AS IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL PROGRAMS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. THE GOAL IS TO BRING THE PEOPLE CLOSER TO THE GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO HELP THEM DEVELOP A STAKE IN LOCAL AND CENTRAL INSTITUTIONS. THE APPOINTED SHURAS WILL BE DISSOLVED WHEN DISTRICT COUNCILS ARE ELECTED AND CAN TAKE ON THE ROLE. (DATES FOR DISTRICT ELECTIONS ARE PART OF THE CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE OVER THE ELECTORAL LAW; IDLG'S TARGET DATE FOR DISTRICT ELECTIONS IS 2011.)

13. (SBU) THE IDLG CHOSE 11 PRIORITY PROVINCES BASED ON THEIR SEVERE AND/OR WORSENING SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE SITUATIONS: BADGHIS, FARAH, FARYAB, GHAZNI, HELMAND, LOGAR, KAPISA, WARDAK, KANDAHAR, URUZGAN, AND ZABUL. ACCORDING TO ASOP PROGRAM MANAGER ENGINEER FARHAD, THE ORDER IN WHICH THE

PROVINCES WILL BE TARGETED WILL, TO SOME EXTENT, DEPEND ON WHICH PROJECTS AND PROVINCES DONORS CHOOSE TO SUPPORT. IDLG WOULD LIKE TO FOLLOW THE PILOT PROJECT ALREADY UNDERWAY IN WARDAK PROVINCE WITH PROGRAMS IN LOGAR AND KAPISA PROVINCES, BUT THIS WILL DEPEND ON FUNDING. IDLG DEPUTY BARNA KARIMI EMPHASIZES THAT IMPLEMENTATION IN PROVINCES CONCENTRIC TO KABUL IS IMPORTANT FOR MAINTAINING SECURITY IN THE CAPITAL. (EMBASSY IS DEVELOPING A RESPONSE TO IDLG'S REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR THE LOGAR AND KAPISA INITIATIVES.)

¶4. (SBU) THE U.S. AND OTHER DONORS HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THE MERITS OF ALIGNING ASOP WITH THE FOCUSED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT (FDD) PROGRAM RUN BY COMBINED SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND-AFGHANISTAN (CSTC-A) TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF POLICE AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL. ALIGNMENT HAS OCCURRED SO FAR BY COINCIDENCE, AS A RESULT OF CERTAIN DISTRICTS ENDING UP NEAR THE TOP OF BOTH THE ASOP AND FDD PRIORITY LISTS. THE INTENTION IS THAT BY LATE 2008 (PHASE SEVEN OF THE FDD PROGRAM) THIS OVERLAP WILL OCCUR BY DESIGN AND AGREEMENT AMONG ALL PARTIES.

#### IDLG CLAIMS SUCCESSES IN WARDAK PILOT

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¶5. (SBU) IDLG,S PROGRESS IN WARDAK PROVINCE PROVIDES A PREVIEW OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE ASOP NATIONALLY. IN A MARCH 15 MEETING WITH INTERNATIONAL DONORS, IDLG DEPUTY KARIMI OUTLINED THE PROGRESS MADE BY THE ASOP IN GATHERING SUPPORT FROM A SKEPTICAL POPULATION FEARFUL OF ASSOCIATING WITH THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT. HE REPORTED THE PROGRAM HAS ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY COUNCILS IN SAYEDABAD AND NIRKH DISTRICTS, INCREASED LAGGING POLICE RECRUITMENT, AND FACILITATED GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL. IDLG HIGHLIGHTS SUPPORT RECEIVED TO DATE FROM THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE FOR SECURITY (NDS), RELATIONSHIPS THAT WILL BE IMPERATIVE TO THE

PROGRAM,S SUCCESS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. TO ENSURE THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE DISTRICT SHURAS, AN ASOP COORDINATION UNIT, COMPOSED OF APPROXIMATELY THREE IDLG PERSONNEL, WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN WARDAK (AND OTHER PROVINCES WHERE ASOP IS IMPLEMENTED). IDLG IS CONVINCED ASOP WILL TRANSFORM WARDAK WITHIN A YEAR.

#### DONORS DELIBERATE OVER PROGRAM,S MERITS

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¶6. (SBU) IDLG HAS MOVED BEYOND ITS EARLY RESISTANCE TO EVEN CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM AND NOW WELCOMES INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE ASOP. A SMALL GROUP OF DONORS (THE U.S., THE UK, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, AND CANADA) HAS MET INFORMALLY SEVERAL TIMES TO DISCUSS THE PROGRAM AND SUBMITTED DETAILED, PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS DIRECTLY TO THE IDLG. PRINCIPAL AMONG THE CLARIFICATIONS REQUESTED BY DONORS WERE: THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY COUNCILS AND EXISTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES, THE PROGRAM,S IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY, AND THE CAPACITY OF IDLG TO IMPLEMENT SUCH A LARGE AND COMPLEX PROGRAM. IDLG HAS RESPONDED QUICKLY AND COHERENTLY TO DONOR CONCERNS AND IS CURRENTLY INCORPORATING CLARIFICATIONS IN A REVISED ASOP DOCUMENT TO BE RELEASED IN THE SECOND WEEK IN APRIL.

¶7. (SBU) THE U.S. AND OTHER DONORS ARE COLLABORATING ON POSSIBLE WAYS TO FUND THE ASOP AND IDLG IN THE SHORT AND LONG TERM. ALTHOUGH SOME DONORS (PRINCIPALLY CANADA AND THE UK) HAVE SUGGESTED A POOLED FUNDING APPROACH, IDLG HAS PRESSED FORWARD IN APPROACHING INDIVIDUAL DONORS TO SUPPORT PROVINCES IN WHICH THEY HAVE NATIONAL EQUITIES. IDLG HAS APPEALED TO THE UNITED STATES DIRECTLY FOR SUPPORT IN IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM IN WARDAK, LOGAR, KAPISA, GHAZNI, ZABUL, FARAH, AND POSSIBLY KUNAR. IN A MARCH 8 MEETING WITH IDLG DIRECTOR GENERAL JELANI POPAL, THE AMBASSADOR UNDERLINED U.S. COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING ASOP IMPLEMENTATION. POST IS PUTTING TOGETHER A PLAN TO QUICKLY SUPPORT THE SOCIAL OUTREACH PROGRAM IN TARGET PROVINCES. WITH IMPLEMENTATION IN WARDAK UNDERWAY, IDLG IS LOOKING FOR FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT THE

PROGRAM IN LOGAR BEGINNING IN APRIL.

ASOP - A TACTICAL COMPONENT OF IDLG'S STRATEGIC PLAN

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18. (SBU) THE ASOP IS THE FIRST OF SEVERAL IDLG INITIATIVES THAT WILL STRENGTHEN SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNANCE OVER THE LONG TERM. THE IDLGS FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC WORK PLAN (NOT YET FORMALLY RELEASED) PROVIDES A ROAD MAP FOR THE GOVERNMENT,S OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE. THE PLAN INCLUDES AN APPROXIMATELY \$160 MILLION BUDGET FOR VARIOUS PROGRAMS RELATED TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT, INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND BROADER GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVES.

19. (SBU) ALTHOUGH SOME DONORS WERE INITIALLY WARY OF THE IDLG,S CAPACITY TO FULFILL AN EXPANDING MANDATE IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE, THE IDLG HAS SHOWN IT CAN BE VISIONARY, ASSERTIVE, AND NIMBLE. THE IDLG QUICKLY DEMONSTRATED ITS ABILITY TO AFFECT CHANGE IN GOVERNANCE AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL THROUGH GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENTS. THE ASOP IS THE IDLGS FIRST ATTEMPT TO TRANSFORM GOVERNANCE AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL AS WELL. THE U.S. AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ARE POISED TO GIVE THE ASOP AND IDLG THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO SUCCEED.

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